

Introduction

Session Objectives:

- . Understand what personal branding is and why it matters
- Learn how to structure a high-impact, outcome-driven leadership CV aligned with strategic institutional goals
- Develop awareness of best practices for preparing for skills-based/competency interviews at executive level
- . Leave with clear next steps for strengthening visibility and positioning in the HE sector







Your unique identity

A combination of values, skills, and personality that defines who you are.

How others see you

The way people perceive you based on your actions, words, and presence.

Your professional & social signature

The lasting impression you create in different environments.

WHAT IS A PERSONAL BRAND?

Your brand is what other people say about you when you're not in the room

Jeff Bezos

WHY PERSONAL BRANDING MATTERS

Sometimes the bravest and most important thing you can do is just show up

Brené Brown



Competence: increasing influence

Build credibility by showcasing your ideas and expertise to gain more impact in your field



Connection: opens new opportunities

Attracts career growth, collaborations and valuable connections



Consistency: building trust and recognition

Future proofing. Become a trusted authority

WHAT OTHERS SAY

Personal branding matters because it is a direct signal of your credibility, trust, and effectiveness. But it must be consistent, values led and above all else authentic.

Got right, it will help your students, staff, stakeholders, the public to be more confident about your vision and your decisions. I think it can also inspire top academics and talented students to want to be at your institution because you visibly stand for its values and mission.

Most importantly, a clear and visible personal brand will help you to communicate more effectively, absolutely essential to build your teams, driving change, and leading through crisis. Funny thing is, relatively few university senior leaders ever think about their 'brand.

Senior leaders represent their organisation externally. A strong personal brand helps amplify and align their values with the organisation in public forums, industry discussions, and policy advocacy.

Personal branding signals what a leader stands for ethically, strategically, and culturally. It helps align teams and attract talent who resonate with that leadership style.

People are always going to draw conclusions from what they see you do, so you always need to be aware of that.

I don't use personal brand with the goal of 'selling' me.

However, I do want to consistently communicate important and specific aspects of how I work - such as that I care about other people's growth - and I try to align all my social media and other communications with that message.

Professor Janice Kay CBE
Director, Higher Futures
(former Provost at the University of Exeter)

Professor Simon Biggs
Vice Chancellor and President
James Cook University, Australia

Professor Shân Wareing Vice Chancellor and CEO Middlesex University

STEPS TO DEVELOP YOUR IDENTITY

How to stand out - for the right reasons, to the right people and across the right platforms



What's your goal - define your core values and strengths



Who are you speaking to?



What do you want to be known for?

ARTICULATING EXPERTISE BEYOND JOB TITLES



01

Clear over clever

People appreciate authenticity. Stay true to your values and strengths.

02

Concise

Keep it brief. Good enough is good enough.

03

Consistency

Choose one platform where your audience is most active.

PRACTICAL TIPS

The power of story telling

Don't be afraid of showing your personality – people are interested in the person behind the title, company and credentials –

Share your thoughts and unique experiences as this helps you stand out

Design once use often



POSTING LIKE A PRO

- ✓ Strong visual hook: Images (portrait) stand out (selfies)
- ✓ Strong written hook: create a powerful 1st line
- ✓ Infographics and carousels get high dwell time (> 5 images)
- ✓ Text-only posts have the lowest reach
- ✓ Avoid long posts: hard to read on mobile (>50% of LI activity)
- ✓ White space matters: avoid huge blocks of text
- ✓ Use lists and emojis
- ✓ Don't use hashtags
- ✓ End with a question to encourage engagement
- ✓ Write as you would talk
- ✓ Engage on other posts: comment
- ✓ Re-post with a comment
- ✓ Use scheduling tools and Chat GPT

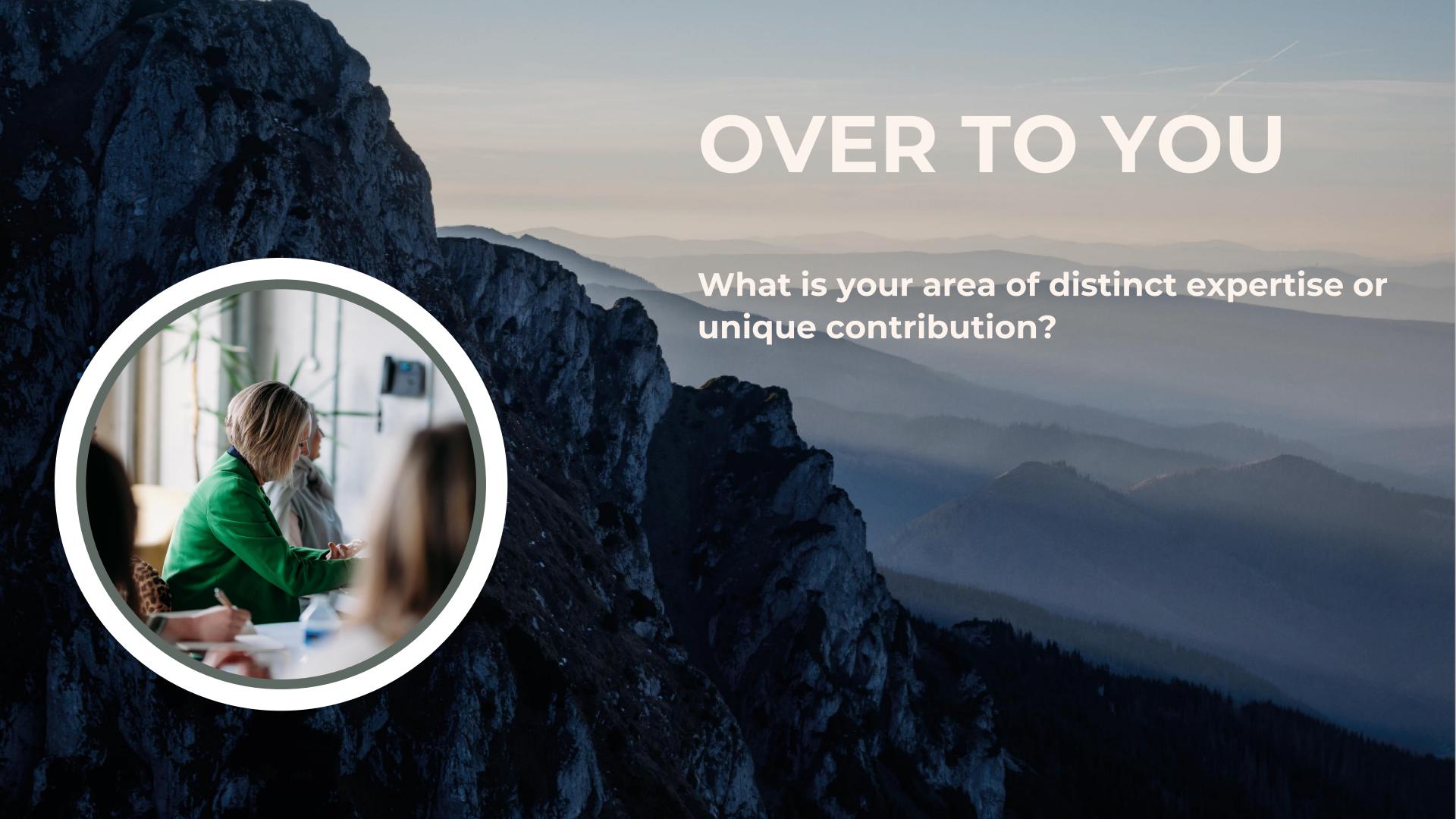


COMPELLING HOOKS

- ✓ 3 things I wished I'd known when starting my career
- ✓ What no-one tells you about....
- ✓ My happy place ...
- √ [X] has been a game-changer for me
- ✓ # questions you should ask before
- ✓ 3 years ago, I
- ✓ 5 secrets to
- ✓ The quickest way to
- ✓ 3 steps to
- ✓ The truth about
- ✓ The ONE thing you need to know about....
- ✓ What to do with....
- ✓ A beginner's guide to.....
- ✓ Let's talk about ...

Imitate and innovate





Elevating your Executive Brand: Personal Branding Through the CV

Senior-level roles are not recruited on qualifications or duties — but on **strategic alignment, sector vision, leadership track record**, and *narrative coherence*. Senior-level CVs are *strategic documents*, not chronological lists.

Title: Senior University Leader

Summary:

Experienced higher education executive with a strong background in institutional leadership, strategic planning, internationalisation, and innovation. Led a multicampus university with oversight of academic and operational excellence.

Key Contributions:

- Led as part of a team on strategy and planning activities
- Oversaw academic and financial performance
- Championed innovation, internationalisation and research
- Developed global networks and industry partnerships

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| | Title: Senior University Leader | Title: Vice-Chancellor, Multi-Campus University |
|--|--|--|
| | Summary: Experienced higher education executive with a strong background in institutional leadership, strategic planning, internationalisation, and innovation. Led a multi-campus university with oversight of academic and operational excellence. | Summary: Vice-Chancellor of a multi-campus university (10,000+ students, 900 staff), driving strategic growth, global partnerships, academic excellence, and financial sustainability. Chaired senior executive bodies and served as Council Governor. |
| | Key Contributions: Led as part of a team on strategy and planning activities Oversaw academic and financial performance Championed innovation, internationalisation and research Developed global networks and industry partnerships | Key Contributions: - Increased turnover from £50M to £80M+ and student numbers from 4,500 to 7,500 in 5 years - Improved national league table position by 26 places, achieving top quartile NSS satisfaction (90%) and graduate employment >93% - Raised international student ratio from <3% to 15%, and PG enrolment from 4% to 12% - Delivered £120M capital expansion, including teaching and residential facilities - Boosted research income by 371%; 84% increase in HEFCE funding, 95% of research impact internationally recognised - Increased operating surplus from 1.3% to 9.7% in 2 years - Grew female professorial representation from 2% to 39% |

People can only process a limited amount of information at once.

Overloading a CV with long blocks of text or multiple pages increases cognitive load and reduces retention.

(Sweller, 1988; Cognitive Load Theory)

Elevating your Executive Brand: Personal Branding Through the CV

Key Elements of a Strategic CV:

Executive Summary (~5 lines):

- This is your "leadership pitch." Who are you? What's your value proposition? What are you known for?
- Avoid clichés ("dynamic leader") aim for concrete descriptors ("Transformational HE leader with a track record of delivering digital innovation at scale.")

Achievements Framed for Impact:

- Outcomes over responsibilities use metrics, transformations and change
- Key achievements in leadership, strategy, governance and innovation
- Use metrics and scope: "Led cross-functional team of 90 to deliver £10M digital campus transformation, increasing student satisfaction by 15%."
- Link actions to strategic goals: "Aligned new faculty governance structures with TEF priorities."

Tailoring & Framing:

- Differentiate CVs based on region or role (e.g. civic university vs. global brand-building).
- Include specific sections for:
 - Strategic initiatives
 - Board-level engagement
 - External impact (sector influence, policy contributions)

Skills-Based Interviews: From Competence to Confidence

Key Competencies to Expect:

- Strategic thinking & foresight
- Inclusive and ethical leadership
- Stakeholder engagement (internal & external)
- Change leadership and resilience
- Innovation and digital transformation

Common Mistakes to Avoid:

- Underselling your leadership role ("I was part of..." instead of "I led...")
- Lack of specificity (vague references to "impact" without evidence)
- Speaking in institutional rather than personal voice

STAR+ Model for Senior Leaders



Situation

Set the strategic context (policy change, institutional challenge)



Task

What were you expected to deliver?



Action

What did you personally lead, influence, or change?



Result

What was the tangible or systemic outcome?



+: Reflective insight

What you learned, how it shaped your leadership



- "What is the leadership story that only I can tell?"
 - "What 3 themes consistently appear in the work I'm proudest of?"

"What kind of legacy do I want to leave behind in HE?

Career Visibility & Sector Positioning

Key Channels:

- o Thought leadership: articles, conference panels, papers
- Governance roles: diversify visibility via non-exec positions or sector working groups
- Digital presence: LinkedIn as a living CV make it narrativedriven, not job-listing-based
- Media mentions and sector influence: Where does your voice show up?

START. STOP. CONTINUE







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